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Ministry of Forests
Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

NEW FOREST CODE WILL FOCUS ON RESULTS

VANCOUVER – The British Columbia government is proposing to shift its forest management focus from paperwork to protection by cutting through the regulatory burden in the current Forest Practices Code that stands in the way of peak environmental and economic performance.

"One of our New Era commitments was to streamline the Forest Practices Code to establish a workable, results-based code, with tough penalties for non-compliance," Forests Minister Michael de Jong said today, as he released a discussion paper to invite comments on the government's proposals.

"The forest industry has been captured by a prescriptive, inefficient and ineffective legislative maze for far too long. It is time to cut the regulatory burden to make way for a competitive, market-based industry. We want accountability for on-the-ground results, not accountability for paperwork."

For example, under the existing code, forest companies are required by law to complete three different plans with the Ministry of Forests before they begin operations: a forest development plan, a silviculture prescription, and a road layout and design. Under the results-based code, one simplified plan will be required.

De Jong stressed that the new code will maintain British Columbia's high environmental standards for everything from wildlife protection to retention of old-growth stands while cutting out the complexity that discourages best practices, confuses accountability and drives up costs to government and industry.

He said the consultation leading to the new code will be open and transparent. British Columbians can review the detailed discussion paper and offer comments between now and June 30, 2002, and changes will be made as necessary.

"The best way to protect the ecological integrity of our forest lands is to give forest companies a clear set of results they must achieve and then to hold them accountable for achieving them," said Joyce Murray, minister of water, land and air protection. "My ministry will continue to have a strong role in standard setting and enforcement to ensure environmental values are protected."

The new code will build on British Columbia's existing compliance and enforcement regime, already one of the most comprehensive in North America, allowing government to intervene if necessary and respond promptly if a company fails to achieve the code's stated results. In addition, the Ministry of Forests is restructuring its compliance and enforcement organization to make it more effective and efficient.

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An MLA committee, chaired by North Island MLA Rod Visser, will hold a series of public meetings, and the detailed discussion paper is available at http://www.resultsbasedcode.ca or from any Ministry of Forests office. George Hoberg, head of the department of forest resources management at the University of British Columbia, will hold technical meetings with specific stakeholders as well as compiling all comments in a report for government this summer.

Legislation will be introduced this fall, with implementation of the new results-based code in April 2003.

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